



Toolbox Talks

Spotlight on Safety



Chain Saw Safety

Chain saws can save a lot of time and effort when used safely. Many chain-saw accidents happen because users do not follow the manufacturer's instructions and do not understand the saw's hazards. A chain saw in the hands of an inexperienced or careless operator can be dangerous to the user and other workers.

The most common cause of chain-saw accidents is "kickback." Kickback occurs when the teeth at the saw tip or the upper chain grab into the wood or other obstruction, causing the saw to kickback in an upward arc toward you. If you do not have control of the saw you could be seriously injured or even killed by the saw.

Workers who use chain saws should observe the following safety practices:

- ▲ Read the manufacturer's operating and safety instructions before using any chain saw.
- ▲ Wear snug-fitting clothing, cut-resistant chaps or chain saw protective pants, safety shoes or boots, work gloves, hard hat, and eye and ear protection.
- ▲ Carry the chain saw with the engine stopped, the guide bar and cutting chain to the rear, and the muffler away from your body.
- ▲ Do not operate a chain saw that is damaged or improperly adjusted. The chain must be sharp so it cuts easily (fine wood dust indicates a dull blade). The chain tension must be properly adjusted to prevent it from coming off the guide bar and striking the user or another worker; learn how to check and adjust the chain. The chain should not move when the engine is idling.
- ▲ Use caution when handling fuel. Let the saw cool down before refueling, and do not smoke while refueling.
- ▲ Start the saw by using one of the starting methods in the operator's manual. Never drop start a chain saw. You may lose control of the saw and be injured.
- ▲ Hold the saw firmly in both hands when cutting. Grasp the rear (throttle) handle with the right hand, even if you are left handed, and grasp the forward handle with the left hand, palm down. Keep your left elbow stiff. This will help prevent the saw from striking you should it kickback.
- ▲ Never stand directly in back of where you are cutting. Stand to the side of the cut. When cutting limbs from a felled tree, stand on the opposite side of the trunk from the cut.
- ▲ Saw only with the bottom part of the chain, with the work against the saw or saw bumper. Never cut with the tip of the chainsaw and if available, use a tip guard.
- ▲ Do not overreach or cut above shoulder height and be sure you have secure footing. It is very difficult to control the saw in awkward positions.
- ▲ Look for dead limbs high in the tree that can break off and fall on you before cutting down a tree.
- ▲ Plan an escape route 45 degrees to the rear of the tree fall line in case the tree does not fall where you expect to.

Make sure the chain saw cuts the wood, not you!